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Gardner, Horace C.

The "all American" plea

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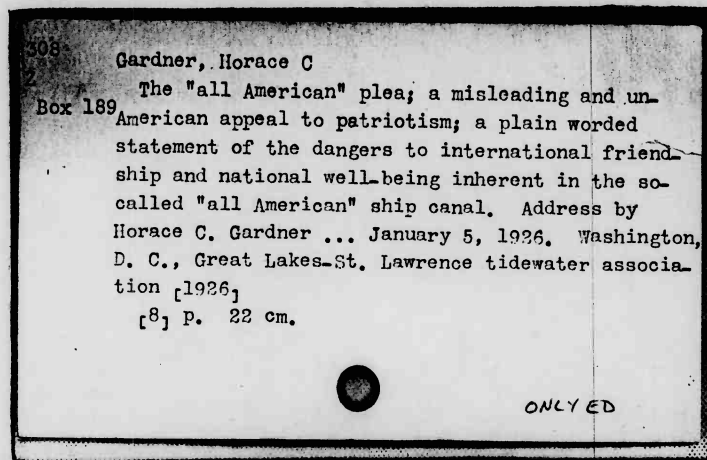
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The
"ALL AMERICAN" PLEA

**A Misleading and Un-American
Appeal to Patriotism**

A plain worded statement of the
dangers to international friendship
and national well-being inherent
in the so-called "All American"
Ship Canal :- :- :-

Address by

HORACE C. GARDNER

*President, Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Tidewater Association
St. Paul, Minnesota, January 5, 1926*

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Tidewater Association

CHARLES P. CRAIG, Executive Director

521-523 Munsey Building, Washington, D. C.

The west demands and must have relief from the distorted transportation relationship with the rest of the world caused principally by the Panama Canal and by the advanced rates made necessary for the railroads by the increasing wage-rates and materials prices. Both these causes are the outgrowth of wars. The Spanish-American war brought home to the United States the necessity for a trans-isthmian canal, and the World War directly caused the advances in wage-rates and materials prices.

When we proposed improvements to bring the sea, economically speaking, a thousand miles nearer, we were met with clamant voices of objection from regions that had for so long dominated policies in our country that their sense of fairness had become dwarfed and atrophied. New York as a State, officially, condemned us without trial by appointing a commission charged with the duty of our defeat; and in Canada Montreal rose in objection.

These objections of the earlier days were so inconsistent and in so many cases based on alleged facts promptly shown not to be facts, that they have largely subsided, though never formally withdrawn. The cry from New York against improving the St. Lawrence route because it would build up the Port of Montreal at the expense of the Port of New York was so ludicrous when Montreal at the same time was crying aloud that theirs would become but a port of call, that the fair-minded public in both countries accepted neither plea as genuine.

The plea from New York that the route would be long, tortuous, and beset with fogs and ice, fell away when the facts as to distance savings were published and the official charts of fog and ice probabilities of the U. S. Hydrographic Office were brought forth.

While these early objections, so inconsistent in themselves and so falsely founded, have largely subsided, the opposition has not ceased, but is still intent on thwarting us. Toward the close of the last Congress, pleas were pressed for another survey (just one more) of the old and many times examined Great Lakes-Hudson route. Fortunately, our friends in the Senate were alert and the provision, an

item in the rivers and harbors bill, was amended to require a report by next April at latest. Without disparagement, let me commend the splendid work of Senator Norbeck and the lamented Senator Ladd on this occasion.

So we may expect next April two reports from boards of engineers, the new International Board on the St. Lawrence route, and a special board on the Great Lakes-Hudson route. We could well leave the matter there if the opposition would, but within the month comes a statement from one of their leaders in which indeed he pays us high compliment for our effective organization and refers to the comparison of the reports to come in the spring, but goes on in an appeal to pseudo patriotism and raises the "All-American" plea again. It is with this false plea that I shall mainly deal in this address, but let me first briefly point out a few things that the expected report on the Oswego-Hudson route must inevitably show:

In the first place, distance. By the St. Lawrence route there will be a distance advantage to Liverpool, London and all the North Sea and Channel ports of over five hundred miles, and to Copenhagen and all the Scandinavian and Baltic ports over eight hundred and fifty miles. As to locks to be passed, seven on the St. Lawrence route against thirty or more; and miles of confined channels about thirty on the St. Lawrence route, to ninety-five by the Oswego-Hudson route. Of comparative costs let us say nothing now, except that the St. Lawrence route with all the power of the International section of the St. Lawrence fully developed, will surely cost less, much less, than the Oswego-Hudson route with no power.

II.

THE "ALL-AMERICAN" PLEA.

How the designation "All American" instantly catches the sentiment of nearly all of us! For patriotic we are and ever would be, which fact in reference to many things forecloses judgment founded upon reason. One of the major causes for trouble in the world is the almost universal yielding of reason to prejudice. We are much

given to this in our own United States, but the habit is not by any means "all-American," for there are others, many others, of the world's peoples who are quite as prompt to respond to the patriotic formula without any systematic reasoning. And we would not weaken patriotism, that lovely beacon pointing through cloud and storm the true way and summoning us ever to shun the by-paths of personal profit and expediency. We need to realize, though, that the true heart of patriotism is righteousness and that like almost all good things it is counterfeited, so that always we must summon our will to fairness and our reasoning faculties to help in the process of judging all patriotic appeals. The cultivation of the judicial mind is all too infrequent in so many of life's affairs.

Is the appeal in the term "all-American," then, genuine or counterfeit, applied to the proposed way for ocean-going ships from the Atlantic to our Great Lakes? At the very outset we must observe that these five lakes, nature's greatest reservoirs of fresh water, are not *ours* in any selfish or exclusive sense, but in that larger sense that includes our good neighbor Canada, owner, divisionally speaking, of half of four out of the total five and of half of in the interconnecting waters. And the respective halves are not in common or undivided, but from the margins to located lines between the two countries. But by treaties the two countries have common use for navigation purposes of the whole five lakes and interconnecting waters and of the St. Lawrence from its source to that point a hundred and thirteen miles farther down, where the international boundary leaves the river and runs due eastward between the State of New York and the Province of Quebec. From this point to the Atlantic, more than another thousand miles, the great river that soon widens into a tidal estuary leading to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, is not bordered by the United States, but by Canada, so that it is, again speaking in the national sense and from the more northerly viewpoint, all Canadian. But again the use for navigation is international by virtue of a treaty ratified in 1871 and irrevocable by its terms.

III.

For shipping, therefore, all these waters are truly international, half ours, half Canada's, and our question becomes, "Is it true or false patriotism to propose, to discuss or even to wish for an "all-American" way? And the term "all-American" must, of course, be understood as meaning all-U. S. A.

A necessary component of any question of applied patriotism is the *sinn fein*, or, as we may say with not the least implication of unworthiness, the selfish element. It is not unworthy to seek our self-interest if we seek not at the expense or to the hurt of others, and the regard for others must be live and not mere passive recognition of rights. Bringing our thoughts to the matter in hand, it is pertinent to ask if we serve our self-interest by building our own shipway; if our friendly neighbor will be hurt; or if not positively hurt, will she be put to an unwelcome and expensive necessity to build her own "all-Canadian" shipway? Is Canadian patriotism involved, and do our interests and our neighbor's clash? It is proper to note that there have been some, though not many, statements in the Canadian press and public addresses favoring an "all-red" route, not meaning, of course, any advocacy of communistic ideas, but showing the British imperialistic trend. It seems clear, therefore, that any building of either the suggested "all-American" or "all-red" route would be followed by the construction of the other, and each nation would then have its own nationally controlled way for ships from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes.

IV.

Before considering trade and other possibilities, it will be pertinent to describe the most advantageous routes that might be developed, each nation for itself. On the U. S. side the many examinations of former years make it certain that the "all-American" way would be up the Hudson to the vicinity of Albany, thence keeping pretty closely to the present barge canal route up the Mohawk, through Lake Oneida and into Lake Ontario at Oswego. This is the Oswego-Hudson route, already briefly and unfavorably compared with the St. Lawrence route.

On the Canadian side the only route to be thought of seriously would leave the St. Lawrence river at Montreal, follow up the Ottawa through their capital city, across the divide to Lake Nipissing and down the French river into Georgian Bay—the “*Georgian Bay*” route, much discussed two decades ago. Its physical advantages and disadvantages may be briefed thus: It is the shortest of all the routes, but does not serve Toronto, Hamilton, and all the other ports of Lake Ontario. It would cost much more, and yield much less power than the St. Lawrence route, and have many more locks.

V.

Why should the Canadians want their “all-red” and we our “all-American” route? Some there are in each nation who see or think they see advantage to their nation, and, of course, a disadvantage to the other. The point of view presupposes rivalry and some rivalry there is, but those who stress this consideration greatly magnify its importance, and, so-to-speak, its volume. Even a scanning of statistics of the trade between the two countries cannot fail to bring the conviction that there are overwhelming reasons for friendship and growing trade relations. From the U. S. viewpoint we must see, and should appreciate the fact, that our Canadian neighbors are in our “best customer” class, so that there should be not only friendly sentiment, but friendly treatment.

Trade and business rivalries have their important bearing on peace. Not so important as some writers conclude, none the less to be kept in mind and fended against, to do which we must cast out both jealousy and that degree of greed that desires to get to the hurt of others. What can so much help to fend against this jealousy and greed as the building up of common interests, engaging in common undertakings for the benefit of both peoples? And the “greatest of these” is the St. Lawrence route. Its improvement will serve both peoples equally and amply for the shipping demand, and the incidental power will advantage all New York and New England on our side and Ontario and Quebec on theirs.

VI.

There are some things to be said about the power side of the problem. Now that the world has learned how to make long distance distribution of energy and how to build hydro-electric generating units yielding 90 per cent over-all efficiency, have we, the peoples of these two nations, inheritors of these common resources, a moral right to allow the power to run, unharnessed, year in and year out to waste, while we burn each year to produce the equivalent power, scores of millions of tons of our coal? And the best development of the St. Lawrence for shipping includes incidentally the dams over which must flow, either idly or productively, water that may produce horsepower reckoned in millions. Just a little friendly co-operation between the two peoples will bring the needed helps for navigation, the much wanted power and this great measure of conservation. We owe it to ourselves and to the oncoming generations as well to do it now. Neglect is not only an economic but a moral wrong.

VII.

Having noted that there is a bearing on the peace problem involved, let us look into this phase of the question somewhat. One advocate of the “all-American” route used the statement that “whoever controls the mouth of a stream controls the stream,” which is not true even in a military sense. It is a delicate matter, this discussion of peace with our fine and nearest neighbor. The world used to have seven wonders, but we now have many more, and have relegated some of the original seven to the minor column. Departing from any list of the altogether material, one of the worthy wonders is the unbroken peace with this neighbor, with thousands of miles of unguarded common border, for more than a century. Suppose we should proceed with the construction of the “all-American” shipway from the Hudson across New York State to Oswego, what would be the inevitable reaction in Canada and Great Britain? With such Hudson-Oswego route completed, we would be in position to put into

T H E W A Y T O T H E S E A

Lake Ontario, without let or hindrance, battleships and cruisers, destroyers and submarines and what not in the way of fighting craft. Would the people of Toronto, Hamilton and other cities of Ontario feel secure? True, we have a treaty under which both nations are bound to keep war craft out of the lakes, but treaties do not always save the day. The reaction inevitably would be bad, there would come instantly a demand by our neighbors for the immediate construction of their Georgian Bay route, and the two countries would find themselves racing for the earliest completion of two shipways, each a potential danger to the other country. Would this make for peace? With the Georgian Bay route under construction, how would the people of Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago and a hundred other places look upon the situation? One early reaction would be a demand for the immediate fortification of the Straits of Mackinac and the creation of modern defense works at Fort Gratiot, Michigan. Could our Government neglect such necessary precautions and resist the political and other varieties of pressure that would demand these fortifications? They would be finished and fitted before either shipway could be completed—and how would the peace probabilities on our North American continent look then?

The patriotism in the "all-American" plea is counterfeit, as counterfeit as the "all-red" plea on the Canadian side. Both are frank jingoism and dangerous to the harmony of our U. S.-Canadian relations. The only route for the necessary shipway is in the St. Lawrence river—"all-American" in the true sense, for it will serve amply and helpfully all the people of both countries. In the right sense of the term, the St. Lawrence route is the only "all-American" route.

I denounce the Oswego-Hudson route as a poor and unsatisfactory substitute. We demand the St. Lawrence route. I denounce the plea "all-American" and put upon it the brand "counterfeit."

**END OF
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